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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 000766

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [AF](#) [NL](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: READOUT OF DUTCH PRT RECCE TEAM TRIP TO AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. THE HAGUE 578

1B. THE HAGUE 477 (NOTAL)

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR NATHANIEL DEAN  
FOR REASONS 1.5 (B AND D)

11. (C) Summary: Acting PolCouns obtained a readout on March 23 on the recent GONL PRT recce team visit to Afghanistan from Joost Flamand (protect), the MFA team rep. The team visited Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif and Konduz, and had meetings with Task Force Victory in Bagram and with ISAF and UN officials in Kabul. Flamand's overall impression from the trip was positive. He cited the UK PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif as an appealing model, and that he saw the prime function of a Dutch PRT as providing stability along the lines of their deployment in Iraq. Clearly defined medevac and in extremis support arrangements will be crucial in obtaining parliamentary support. Flamand identified Baghlan as a possible location for a Dutch PRT and said they seek to partner with the Canadians, Belgians and Germans. In terms of next steps, Flamand said MFA and MOD will seek Ministerial approval for a follow-on GONL team visit to Afghanistan to identify a specific location and the assets required to undertake a PRT. This should yield a recommendation to Ministers for a decision on Dutch PRT leadership, most likely by the end of April. End Summary.

12. (C) Acting Political Counselor obtained a readout on March 23 from MFA Security Policy Deputy Operations Director Joost Flamand (protect throughout) on the recent visit to Afghanistan by a GONL recce team (REF A). Flamand represented MFA on the joint MOD-MFA team which was in country from March 10-20 to explore options for a Dutch-led PRT. The team visited PRTs in Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif and Konduz. They also had meetings at Task Force Victory at Bagram, and with COMISAF and SRSG Arnoult at UNAMA in Kabul. The team's mission was to enhance GONL understanding of the different types of PRTs, ISAF and OEF relations, and the views of UNAMA, NGOs and ICRC concerning PRTs. Flamand said his overall impression from the trip was positive. He thought the UK-led PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif, which he characterized as engaged more in military liaison than patrolling, seemed like the most appropriate model for the Netherlands. Flamand saw the prime function of a Dutch-led PRT as providing stability similar to their current deployment in Iraq. They would seek to create an environment in which local institutions such as courts and police could develop and function, as opposed to a more elaborate operation like the German-led PRT in Konduz. Clearly defined arrangements on medevac and in extremis extraction will be necessary for gaining parliamentary support, but Flamand felt those could be addressed by the NATO Forward Support Base concept.

13. (C) Emphasizing that he was speaking on a preliminary basis, Flamand said the team was interested in the possibilities for a Dutch-led PRT in Baghlan. He said that UNAMA had urged the Dutch team to explore this location, apparently citing the newly-appointed local governor's difficulties with local warlords. Flamand said this location offered some logistical advantages, including an all-weather road. The Dutch team had been advised that the area held some economic promise which might prove useful in managing the local population's expectations. Flamand also noted the relative low amount of poppy cultivation in the area, stating that the Netherlands does not want to undertake a PRT in an area where the chief source of instability is narcotics-related.

14. (C) Concerning possible partners, Flamand said that based on their long history of cooperation, the GONL remains most interested in partnering with the Canadians, Belgians and Germans (he noted the proximity of Baghlan to Konduz). He said an ideal long-term model for the Dutch would be a leadership rotation with the Canadians and the Belgians along the lines of the UK, Canadian and Dutch-run SFOR sector in Bosnia. Working with the Canadians would also make it easier to gain parliamentary support because the Dutch parliament considers Canada a "big" country, and prefers that Dutch military deployments occur in partnership with such nations. Flamand cited Belgian C-130 lift capacity as a potentially helpful asset. He also thought there might be the possibility of a small Luxembourg contribution thus making it a Benelux operation. In terms of next steps, Flamand said the team would forward a report on the visit to FM Bot and

MOD Kamp and seek their formal approval during the week of March 29-April 2 to dispatch another GONL team to identify a specific location and the particular assets required. That trip would produce a detailed recommendation to Ministers for a decision on PRT leadership, most likely by the end of April.

15. (C) Comment: Flamand is the MFA's lead drafter of policy recommendations concerning military deployments to Afghanistan. As such, he works closely with Dutch MOD Operations Chief Air Commodore Peter Cobelens (who also participated in the recce team visit). While typically incremental, we judge the results of this recent trip to be a positive step towards Dutch leadership of a PRT. End comment.  
SOBEL